

Chicago, IL - With another summer of beach closings looming, U.S. Reps. Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park) and Dan Lipinski (D-Chicago) unveiled the bipartisan *Great Lakes Water Protection Act* establishing a federal deadline to end sewage dumping in the Great Lakes. The legislation imposes fines on persons who violate the Act to be paid into each state's Clean Water Revolving Fund. The fund promotes the construction of sewer infrastructure to protect the Great Lakes.

"We drink from this source and our children swim along the shores of Lake Michigan. We must put a stop to the poisoning of our water supply," Congressman Kirk said.

"More than 27 million Americans depend on the Great Lakes for their drinking water.

Cities along the Great Lakes must become environmental stewards of our country's most precious freshwater ecosystem.

As the shores of our Great Lakes become more densely populated, I am pleased to join with Congressman Lipinski to introduce bipartisan legislation to set a date certain to end sewage dumping in America's largest supply of fresh water."

"As a society, we have taken the Great Lakes for granted, assuming they will always be here for us to use and to enjoy. In reality, though, it is becoming more difficult to utilize the water because of contamination in the lakes," Lipinski said.

Chicago dramatically improved their sewer infrastructure to prevent the dumping of partially-treated raw sewage into Lake Michigan by building the Deep Tunnel. However, other cities along Lake Michigan have been slow to upgrade their sewer infrastructure and continue to pollute the lake.

On March 13, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District dumped 3.27 million gallons of partially-treated raw sewage after heavy rains. Two weeks later, Milwaukee accidentally discharged another 800,000 gallons of waste when testing new computer controls for an underground channel that conveys sewage through their plant. The heavy rainfall in March prompted Milwaukee to ask residents to cut back on their water use to prevent the sewage district from dumping in Lake Michigan. These actions follow the dumping of 1.5 billion gallons of sewage into Lake Michigan in May 2004.

Although there was no direct correlation between Milwaukee's sewage dumping and the closing of Chicago-area beaches in 2004, Cook County beach closings nearly tripled from 213 in 2003 to 613 in 2004. Congressman Kirk is particularly concerned over the 150 beach day closings in his congressional district in 2004, the latest year tracked.

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, Waukegan suffered 38 daily closings, Winnetka 36, Wilmette 22, Highland Park 21, Great Lakes 15 Lake Forest 12 and Lake Bluff 6. All closings were bacteria related with no proven source determined. The total number of Illinois Lake Michigan beach days affected by closings rose from 391 in 2003 to 790 in 2004.

"The number of beach closings in my district in 2004 far outnumbered the days of summer swimming," Kirk said. "This trend must be reversed and this legislation is a step in the right direction."

Milwaukee's record of lake dumping is not alone. East Chicago, Gary, Michigan City, Benton Harbor, South Haven, Holland, and Grand Haven also dump sewage into Lake Michigan.

Kirk and Lipinski's legislation gives cities until 2026 to build the full infrastructure needed to prevent sewage dumping into the Great Lakes. Those who violate EPA sewage dumping regulations after the federal deadline will be fined \$100,000 for every day they are in violation. Both Kirk and Lipinski believe it is time for Great Lakes cities to be held responsible for the health of the lake system.

"The Great Lakes are a critical resource and we must take action to protect them for today and for generations to come," Lipinski said.

Joining Kirk and Lipinski in support of the *Great Lakes Water Protection Act* were Dick Lanyon, Superintendent of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, Cameron Davis from the Alliance of the Great Lakes, Laurel O'Sullivan, Great Lakes Campaign Chair for the Natural Resources Defense Council, Steve Drew, President of the North Shore Sanitary District, Ann Maine, Lake County Board Member, Carol Calabresa, Lake County Board Member, Steve Bartram, Executive Director of Lake Forest Open Lands, John Andersen from the Nature Conservancy, Debra Shore, Chicago Wilderness Society and Chris Canning, Village President of Wilmette. The Brookfield Zoo has lent their support to the legislation as well.

Kirk and Lipinski will introduce the *Great Lakes Water Protection Act* this week. They are also

original co-sponsors of the
Great Lakes Restoration Act
and the
Save Our Waters from Sewage Act.

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